

or artificial channel. The fat, dung, and blood of the animal are sprinkled at the mouth of the ditch and in the water ; thereupon the dam is broken down and the stream pours into the ditch. The sacrifice may only be offered by a man of the II Mayek clan, and for two days afterwards he wears the skin of the beast tied round his head. No one may quarrel with this man while the water is irrigating the crops, else the people believe that the water would cease to flow in the ditch ; more than that, if the men of the 11 Mayek clan were angry and sulked for ten days, the water would dry up permanently for that season. Hence the II Mayek clan enjoins great consideration in the tribe, since the crops are thought to depend on their good will and good offices. Ten elders assist at the sacrifice of the sheep, though they may take no part in it. They must all be of a particular age; and after the ceremony they may not cohabit with their wives until harvest, and they are obliged to sleep at night in their granaries. Curiously enough, too, while the water is irrigating the fields, nobody may kill waterbuck, eland, oryx, zebra, rhinoceros, or hippopotamus. Anybody caught red-handed in the act of breaking this game-law would at once be cast out of the village.¹

Whether the " bride " who used to figure at the ceremony Modern of cutting the dam in Cairo was ever a live woman or not, ^"j^f the Intention of the practice appears to have been to marry at the the river, conceived as a male power, to his bride the corn- t land, which was soon to be fertilized by his water. The ceremony was therefore a charm to ensure the growth of the crops. As such it probably dated, in one form or another,

from ancient times. Dense crowds assembled to witness the cutting of the dam. The operation was performed before sunrise, and many people spent the preceding night on the banks of the canal or in boats lit with lamps on the river, while fireworks were displayed and guns discharged at frequent intervals. Before sunrise a great number of workmen began to cut the dam, and the task was accomplished about an hour before the sun appeared on the

¹ Hon. K. R. Dundas, "Notes on the tribes inhabiting the Baringo District, East Africa Protectorate," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xl. (1910) p. 54.